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## Review of *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* by Peter Frankopan

Michael Wert

Marquette University, [michael.wert@marquette.edu](mailto:michael.wert@marquette.edu)

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53-5345

CB69

MARC

**A Companion to intellectual history**, ed. by Richard Whatmore and Brian Young. Wiley-Blackwell, 2015. 456p bibl index ISBN 9781118294802 cloth, \$195.00; ISBN 9781118508091 ebook, \$43.99

Seventy years ago, a distinguished British philosopher, Robin Collingwood, wrote that all history is thought about past thought. This work suggests that he was right, or at least was right about intellectual history. In 29 chapters, leading researchers address the development over time of their fields of specialization, which include such subbranches of intellectual history as the history of law, political theory, science, economics, aesthetics, and natural rights doctrine. At the same time, they consider current scholarly debates in these subfields. One might think that all of this would make for arduous reading but, in fact, this is an exceptionally stimulating book. Each chapter discusses complex matters with lucidity with no loss in rigor, and each raises questions with great intrinsic interest. What were the ways in which the Enlightenment, so often thought of as secular, was indebted to earlier religious thought? Why were British historians in the early 20th century so drawn to the tenets of German historicism? What debt does modern philosophy owe to a school of thought—skepticism—that has its origins in classical antiquity? An outstanding work. **Summing Up: ★★★** Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above.—*S. Bailey, Knox College*

CC 53-5346

DT83

MARC

Derricourt, Robin. **Antiquity imagined: the remarkable legacy of Egypt and the ancient Near East**. I. B. Tauris, 2016. 288p bibl index ISBN 9781784532758 cloth, \$40.00; ISBN 9780857737595 ebook, contact publisher for price

Modern reception of the ancient world is a thriving field of cultural study, and Derricourt (Univ. of New South Wales, Australia) has written a wonderful addition to the genre. Rare is the book that combines superb scholarship with accessible prose; Derricourt delivers both. His credentials in archaeology and history and his editorial expertise shine in this sometimes quirky, always compelling story of the West's interpretation, both factual and fantastic, of ancient Egypt and the Near East. Chapters include discussions of a wild assortment of pyramid theories, the shifting story of mummies, ethnocentric and race-based visions of the cradles of civilization, the impact of Israeli identity and ancient Judean legends, and the fabled wanderings of Christ's apostles. Overarching this anecdotal approach is a powerful presentation of the imperial and Christian filters through which the modern world has glimpsed its ancient roots. Derricourt offers a history of later generations' self-reflections, as seen mirrored in the polished bronze of the past.

**Summing Up: ★★★** Highly recommended. All levels/libraries.—*J. Tucci, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies*

CC 53-5347

D21

2015-13264 CIP

Frankopan, Peter. **The Silk Roads: a new history of the world**. Knopf, 2015. 645p index ISBN 9781101946329 cloth, \$30.00; ISBN 9781101946336 ebook, contact publisher for price

This 500-page history of the world has central Asia at its core. Frankopan (Oxford) follows a trajectory found in most Silk Road studies, beginning with ancient trade routes and quickly moving into the rise of Eurasian religions, the eventual dominance of Islam, the rise of the Mongols, etc. The book is unique, however, in that it carries the concept of the Silk Road into the present, ending with a notion of how Western countries have wreaked havoc trying to carry out their

own desires along the old silk roads. Overall, the author has an eye for memorable anecdotes that keep the narrative brisk, and this book could be an excellent complement to a world history survey course. Sometimes, important contributions from both new and established consensus scholarship is absent, for example, the notion that Europe had the best fortresses in the world (Tonio Andrade has shown that China built much better fortifications for much of premodern history), but these are minor quibbles that cannot be avoided in a book that tackles such a large time period. **Summing Up: ★★** Recommended. All levels/libraries.—*M. J. Wert, Marquette University*

53-5348

D16

2013-789 CIP

Lowenthal, David. **The past is a foreign country - revisited**. Rev. and updated ed. Cambridge, 2015. 660p bibl index ISBN 9780521851428 cloth, \$99.00; ISBN 9780521616850 pbk, \$29.99; ISBN 9781139898010 ebook, \$24.00

In an academic career spanning seven decades, Lowenthal (emer., Univ. College London), a geographer and an environmentalist, has been active in conservation in its ecological, societal, and heritage manifestations at local, national, and global levels. His reflections on this career led to the publication of *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (CH, Sep'86), widely considered a magnum opus at that time. The return to this 30-year-old work is justified in the opening sentence of the current volume: "The past is everywhere." This signals his essential thesis and, to that end, Lowenthal reexamines the material form, memories, legacy, heritage, and protection of the many pasts in the many places of the world and attempts to fashion "a plausible synthesis out of heterogeneous materials." Twelve chapters are organized into four parts: "Wanting the Past," "Disputing the Past," "Knowing the Past," and "Remaking the Past." A concluding epilogue effects a critical reflection on "The Past in the Present." This fresh look at the future of the past includes a 27-page bibliography, 109 well-integrated illustrations, and 3,057 footnotes. A rich exegesis of a major scholar's life work of value to scholars in the field, policy makers, and an informed general public. **Summing Up: ★★★★★** Essential. General readers; upper-division undergraduates and above.—*B. Osborne, Queen's University at Kingston*

CC 53-5349

U241

20154-25193 CIP

Smith, M. L. R. **The political impossibility of modern counterinsurgency: strategic problems, puzzles, and paradoxes**, by M. L. R. Smith and David Martin Jones. Columbia, 2015. 262p bibl index afp ISBN 9780231170000 cloth, \$45.00; ISBN 9780231539128 ebook, \$44.99

Can insurgency be meaningfully classified as a category or subcategory of war? Is there any difference between irregular and conventional war or between counterinsurgency (COIN) and counterterrorism? Smith (strategic theory, King's College, London) and Jones (political science, Univ. of Queensland) seek "to uncover the hidden thinking that obscures the contemporary understanding of COIN." They argue that to characterize insurgency as its own class of war is a dangerous conceptual mistake, the consequence of a tendency in Western social inquiry to "impose a structure on contingent conditions of the past ... as if there are patterns to be discerned, lessons to be uncovered, and rules to be obeyed." Though the authors are right to warn against grand theorizing, some readers may not be convinced that so few distinctions can be usefully made about insurgency, counterinsurgency, and war. Was the fighting that characterized the Battle of the Bulge not different in kind than what has been seen in Afghanistan and Iraq over the past decade and

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